

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers February 20, 2004

### **NETS National Launches NETSPASS**

Last week, NETS launched NETSPASS, a membership program for employers committed to protecting the health and safety of their organization's workforce. NETSPASS holders receive up-to-date traffic safety information and can network with experienced traffic safety professionals.

NETSPASS provides practical, real world information to manage the traffic safety challenges employers face in today's demanding, ever-changing workplace environment. Whether you're a manager of human resources, fleet operations, health & safety, loss or risk control, employee assistance programs, or finance, you're looking for ways to reduce costs, increase productivity and improve employee relations.

Register in time to participate in the first E-Seminar, Traffic Crashes and Employers: Do You Know the REAL Cost? on February 26th. This e-seminar provides an overview of the total cost of motor vehicle crashes to employers. Crashes that occurred both on and off the job cost employers nearly \$60 billion in 2000. It may surprise many employers to know that one-third of these costs (or \$20 billion) resulted from off-the-job injuries to workers and their dependents.

### **What You Can Expect to Learn in this E-Seminar?**

- The magnitude of the motor vehicle crash problem
- The significant impact of this problem on employers
- Methods for determining the specific impact on your organization
- A plan of action for developing a solution

**Make safety work for you**

**[Join NETS today to reduce unnecessary costs and liability](#)**

### **WHO Proclaims April 7th as Road Safety Day**

World Health Day is an annual advocacy event hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) to mark the date of the organization's establishment. Traditionally held on 7th April, World Health Day is one of WHO's key advocacy tools for reaching out and engaging the general public in discussion and debate on important health issues. This year for the first time in the history of the organization, the Director-General has devoted a World Health Day specifically to Road Safety. Although traffic collisions kill more than 1.2 million people around the world every year, they are largely neglected as a health issue, perhaps because they are still viewed by many as events beyond our control. Yet the risks are known; they include speeding, impaired driving, non-use of motorcycle helmets and seat belts, poor road design, unsafe vehicle design, and poor emergency health services.

NETS encourages all employers to use this international awareness and advocacy day to work within your own organization to promote safe driving practices among all employees. Since road safety is a collective responsibility, employers must take responsibility for the safety and well being of their employees when they are engaged in work-related travel. Whether you manage a fleet of vehicles,

oversee a mobile sales force, or simply employ commuters, you must promote safe driving practices and implement corporate policies and programs that encourage all employees to be safe on the road. Since Road Safety Day on April 7th is the launch of a yearlong focus on traffic safety, participation in the 2004 Drive Safely Work Week campaign will strengthen your commitment to workplace traffic safety. No cost, downloadable campaign materials for your employees will be available on June 1st.

<http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2004/en/>

#### **NHTSA Releases Tire Ratings**

NHTSA announced the release of ratings for tires used on most of the nation's passenger vehicles. Tire ratings can be found on NHTSA's web site at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/cars/testing/utqg>. Here consumers can view ratings for more than 2,200 lines of tires, including most tires now used on passenger cars, minivans, sport utility vehicles and light pickup trucks. Under federal regulation, ratings also must be molded into the outer sidewall of all passenger tires.

#### **U.K. Fleets Face Prosecution for Failing to Check Drivers Licenses**

In the U.K. fleets failing to check driving licenses on a regular basis have been warned they face the risk of prosecution and hefty fines. Industry experts warn that employers – and individual managers – who allow an employee to drive without a valid license could be held responsible. Research into unlicensed driving completed by the Department for Transport (DfT) last year found that the time spent by unlicensed drivers on the road equates to 553,000 hours per month. Those polled in the research agreed employers have a responsibility to ensure that their employees are driving legally. For more information, visit [http://www.fleetnewsnet.co.uk/newshome/home\\_fullarticle/?ArticleID=33296](http://www.fleetnewsnet.co.uk/newshome/home_fullarticle/?ArticleID=33296).

#### **Latest Safety Features Should Be in All Vehicles**

The auto industry should ensure that the latest safety features are available and affordable in all cars and trucks, the second-in-command of the nation's top accident investigation agency told automakers in Las Vegas. "We've learned that safety sells. It sells today. It clearly will sell more tomorrow," National Transportation Safety Board vice chairman Mark Rosenker told an audience at the International Automotive Roundtable conference at the Four Seasons Hotel. For more information, visit [http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj\\_home/2004/Jan-31-Sat-2004/news/23116644.html](http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj_home/2004/Jan-31-Sat-2004/news/23116644.html).

#### **Law Requiring Heavy SUVs to Travel Along Truck Routes**

New York Assemblyman Ivan Lafayette wants to require heavy SUVs to travel along truck routes, saying their girth makes them subject to the same weight-based safety standards as their commercial cousins, the Associated Press recently reported. "Where does a passenger vehicle end and a truck begin?" Lafayette asked. "Is a 10,000-pound Hummer a truck?" Lafayette, who drives a Ford Taurus, said he's preparing legislation that would target nearly two dozen models that weigh more than 6,000 pounds, including Ford Expeditions, Cadillac Escalades and GMC Envoys. If it were to become law, SUVs would have to travel interstate highways or other truck routes, some of them toll roads, with wider lanes and long stretches between exits. Now, large SUVs routinely travel commuter roads with free access to residential areas.

#### **New Study Claims No End to Congestion**

The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy has released a policy brief, as part of its Transportation Reform Series, which states that governments may never be able to eliminate road congestion but suggests several ways that cities and states can move to curb it. Peak-hour traffic congestion is an inherent result of the way modern societies operate with rising traffic congestion an inescapable condition in large and growing metropolitan areas across the world. The brief states that living with congestion is the sole viable option. The only feasible way to accommodate excess demand

for roads during peak periods is to have people wait in line. Although congestion can seem intolerable,

the alternatives would be even worse. Peak-hour congestion is the balancing mechanism that makes it possible for Americans to pursue other goals they value, including working or sending their children to school at the same time as their peers, living in low-density settlements, and having a wide choice of places to live and work. For more information, visit <http://www.brookings.edu/comm/policybriefs/pb128.htm>.

#### **Billboards are No More Distracting than Other Signs or Bare Landscapes**

The study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute for the Foundation for Outdoor Advertising Research and Education found that in a world where motorists are distracted by everything from cell phones to screaming children, billboards aren't any more distracting than other signs or even bare landscapes. The presence of billboards does not cause any measurable difference in driving behavior in terms of visual behavior, speed maintenance, and lane keeping. To view a summary of the study findings, visit [http://www.oaaa.org/foundation/files/Summary\\_Driving\\_Performance.pdf](http://www.oaaa.org/foundation/files/Summary_Driving_Performance.pdf).

#### **Speed and Aggressive Driving Worst Safety Management Problem**

Trucking fleet safety managers said their company executives regard speeding and aggressive driving as the worst safety management problem, according to a report by the Transportation Research Board. A survey of 139 trucking firms' safety managers said 55% of the managers showed those behaviors lead a Top 20 list of safety problems.

#### **GA Law Would Require Windows in Vehicles to Be Down when Lighting Up if Children are Present**

Georgia lawmakers are considering a first-in-the-nation law that would require drivers who smoke to roll down their windows before lighting a tobacco-product with children in the car, according to a report by the Associated Press on February 5. The measure, approved 9-0 on Feb. 4 by a State House committee, would impose a \$15 fine. Supporters say toddlers need legal protection from secondhand smoke. Opponents consider the measure intrusive. The bill would allow police to pull over motorists for smoking while driving with a child in a car safety seat, required in Georgia for youngsters under 4.

#### **USDOT to Launch Safety Inspection Program for Intermodal Container Chassis**

Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta announced that the USDOT will launch a safety inspection program for intermodal container chassis. The inspection program will provide added oversight to help ensure that the trailer beds used by truckers to haul cargo containers are safe. Intermodal container chassis are the flat trailer beds that cargo containers are loaded onto when being transported by truck. They are used to transport more than \$450 billion in cargo value entering and leaving the United States annually. Cargo containers being hauled by rail and shipping companies are regularly transferred to trucks before final delivery. The new inspection program will be modeled on the compliance review program already in place for the nation's trucking community. Chassis providers will be required to obtain a USDOT number and display it on their chassis so that data could be captured. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) will apply the same penalty structure and enforcement actions for equipment, including issuing out-of-service orders and revoking USDOT numbers when needed.

#### **New Crash Test Dummies to Appear**

Five years after safety campaigners killed off Vince and Larry, the affable crash dummies who demonstrated the perils of failing to buckle up, a new generation of spokes dummies will appear on television. The new dummies are children, too big for infant seats but too small for the three-point adult belts that cross the lap and the shoulder. NHTSA says 90 percent of the children who should be using

booster seats, generally those between ages 4 and 8, are not, making them the group least likely to be

properly restrained. For more information, visit

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/01/automobiles/01dummy.html?ex=1076907600&en=55638812cbe8043a&ei=5070>.

#### **NHTSA Revised Advise to Allow Reuse of Child Safety Seats Following a Minor Crash**

Following a review of child safety seat performance, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) revised its advice to parents and caregivers to allow reuse of the seats following a minor crash. This policy change was made to ensure that parents or caregivers continue to correctly restrain their child following a minor crash. It also will reduce the financial burden of unnecessary child safety seat replacement. "Current research indicates that child safety seats are very robust and continue to provide high levels of protection even after being involved in a minor crash," said NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D. "Our new advice reflects this research." The agency continues to recommend that parents and caregivers check with the child seat manufacturer with regard to performance, operation and installation of their child restraint. However, NHTSA also recognizes that minor crashes are unlikely to affect child seat performance. Further, the agency is concerned that advising replacement of a child safety seat after a minor crash creates a financial burden on some parents and could lead to parents or caregivers using no restraint system while seeking a replacement. For more information, visit

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr04-04.html>.

#### **NHTSA Launches New Campaign to Get Parents to Use Child Safety Seats Properly**

Child restraint use is up, but improper use of these safety devices continues to be high, and that's why the NHTSA is launching a new campaign to get parents to use the seats and use them correctly. Nearly 73 percent of all child restraints are improperly used, needlessly exposing children to an increased risk of death or injury. But child restraint use has increased considerably since a similar study in the mid-1990s looked at restraint use for children weighing 60 pounds or less. Between then and now, restraint use has increased from 50.6 percent to 71.5 percent for children in that weight category. Tragically, nearly 12 percent of children were completely unrestrained – and thus at great risk, according to NHTSA. For more information, visit

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr06-04.html>.